



The Federal Redistribution 2009
QUEENSLAND



Public Suggestion Number 26

Warren Truss MP Member for Wide Bay

5 pages

From: Werder, Cecily (W. Truss, MP) [Cecily.Werder@aph.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 24 April 2009 5:49 PM
To: QLD Redistribution
Subject: Submission from Warren Truss
Attachments: Submission AEC Qld redistribution 24apr09.docx; FCC 22042009.pdf

Dear Sir

Please find attached the submission from Mr Warren Truss for the 2009 Redistribution of Federal Electorates in Queensland.

<<Submission AEC Qld redistribution 24apr09.docx>> <<FCC 22042009.pdf>>

Yours sincerely

Cecily Werder

Electorate Officer

Office of Warren Truss MP

Federal Member for Wide Bay

Wt/cw

24 April 2009

Mr Edward Killesteyn
Electoral Commissioner
Redistribution Committee for Queensland
Australian Electoral Commission
GPO Box 2590
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Via email: qld.redistribution@aec.gov.au

Dear Sir

I write to make some suggestions in relation to the 2009 Redistribution of Federal Electorates in Queensland.

KEEP COMMUNITIES TOGETHER:

The Electoral Act lays down criteria to guide the Redistribution Committee in its task. I wish to emphasise the importance, especially in regional areas, of keeping communities together and ensuring that electoral boundaries encompass 'communities of interest'.

The 2006 Redistribution was widely criticised for dividing provincial cities, particularly in coastal Queensland and for crossing logical regional and geographical barriers. I submit that the 2009 Redistribution should seek to correct the anomalies created in 2006 and to reunite cities and communities where ever possible.

On this basis, I make the following suggestions:

The Electorate of Leichhardt is heavily over quota and this Redistribution therefore provides an excellent opportunity to create a new Leichhardt centred on the city of Cairns and its immediate surrounds.

Not all of Townsville can be included in its principal Federal Electorate of Herbert. The balance of Townsville should be included in only one other electorate (presumably Kennedy) not two as occurred in the 2006 Redistribution. Dawson should be a sugar seat based on Mackay and not pressed into the suburbs of Townsville.

Capricornia should include all of Rockhampton and surrounds, including Yeppoon, Mount Morgan and ideally also Gladstone.

All of Bundaberg, including its beachside communities and immediate rural hinterland should be in Hinkler. (I appreciate that this might not be possible if Hinkler also includes Hervey Bay.) The western suburbs of Maryborough, including the railway station should be reunited with the city of Maryborough in Wide Bay.

It should be noted that the people of Maryborough and Hervey Bay were highly critical that their inter-related Fraser Coast community was severed by the electoral boundaries in 2006 for the first time since Federation. The people of Maryborough and Hervey Bay believe very strongly that the 2009 redistribution should correct this anomaly (see attached editorial from the Fraser Coast Chronicle dated 22.04.2009).

People living on the Sunshine Coast were also critical of the 2006 Redistribution when parts of the Sunshine Coast were included in Wide Bay, breaking up their logical 'community of interest'. The whole of the Noosa Shire and about 2,500 voters from the Maroochy Shire were included in Wide Bay, resulting in a poorly understood and illogical boundary line between Fairfax and Wide Bay. If the 2009 Redistribution is unable to reunite the whole of the Sunshine Coast, the new southern boundary of Wide Bay should follow the more clearly understood southern boundary of the former Noosa Shire.

The South Burnett communities of Kingaroy, Nanango, Wondai and Murgon have been unsympathetically divided in almost every Redistribution. These four communities now make up the new South Burnett Regional Council and it is time that their close 'community of interest' was acknowledged by including them in the same Federal Electorate. The Great Dividing Range is a strong geographical boundary to the west of the South Burnett and, as a result, these communities do not have a sound 'community of interest' with the western Queensland Electorate of Maranoa. The logical home for the South Burnett is with the Electorate of Wide Bay or possibly Hinkler, but it is unlikely that the numbers would permit such an option. The South Burnett does have connection with the Central and North Burnett and could be included in the same Federal Electorate – possibly Flynn if Gladstone were to be included in Capricornia.

NEW ELECTORATE:

Changes required for the 2009 Redistribution will be shaped by existing enrolments. The projected significant over-enrolment in Electorates like Leichhardt; Herbert; Hinkler; on the Sunshine Coast; and south, west and north of Brisbane will require significant redesign of many electorates.

It seems inevitable that Kennedy will need to move into Cape York to accommodate the contraction of Leichhardt on to Cairns. Consequently, Kennedy will need to shed voters to Electorates like Maranoa and Flynn.

The heavy concentration of over-enrolment around Brisbane (though not in central Brisbane) suggests that the new seat for Queensland will need to be created in South East Queensland.

I note that Fadden, Oxley, Longman, Blair and Fairfax require the greatest reduction in enrolment in South East Queensland.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES:

With the regular Redistributions that are occurring in Queensland, it is particularly important that boundaries be logical and clear so that constituents are reasonably able to ascertain which Electorate they live in. Especially in regional areas, local government boundaries should be used as Federal Electorate boundaries where ever possible. Council divisional boundaries are also reasonably well understood.

I appreciate that with the extensive amalgamation of local government areas in Queensland during the last year, there will be less options to harmonise Council boundaries with Federal Electorates. Where the new merged boundaries can not be used, old Council boundaries are still fresh in people's minds and stood the test of time, often for more than one hundred years.

Census district boundaries and other statistical divisions are not generally known, and therefore have no relevance to the public. Rivers, mountain ranges, national parks and wilderness areas are sometimes natural barriers and can therefore be suitable also for Electorate boundaries.

It is generally not a sound strategy to use roads and railway lines as boundaries as they invariably divide towns and communities, especially in regional communities. In many country towns, the highway goes up the main street and it is illogical to divide such towns through their heart. If the proposed boundaries generally follow a road and then are diverted around a town so that town is entirely in one Electorate, that town is then inevitably separated from half of its near hinterland. Using local government boundaries keeps a community together for Federal Electorates.

I trust that the Committee will find these comments of assistance in preparing its Redistribution proposals.

Yours sincerely

Original signed.

WARREN TRUSS MP
Federal Member for Wide Bay

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OPINION

Coast cities drawn back together

It is three years since the Australian Electoral Commission triggered a furious barrage of futile objections from the Fraser Coast with a boundary redistribution proposal that sought to tear asunder the region.

Hervey Bay, once the dust had settled, became the preserve of the Hinkler electorate and aligned with Bundaberg. Maryborough came to share the Wide Bay constituency with part of the far-off Sunshine Coast.

Life went on but the political and social landscape was changed utterly – if not irretrievably.

Opponents of the redistribution claimed it did not give due weight to Commonwealth criteria requiring that communities of interest be recognised as key elements in the determination of boundaries.



STEPHEN O'GRADY

Deputy Editor

The separation of Maryborough and Hervey Bay was anecdotally compared with the painful demise of Rome's founding fathers, twin brothers Romulus and Remus.

The Wide Bay United group, with the support of thousands of local voters, documented its concerns but to little or no avail.

Whether the "major detrimental impact on businesses and individuals" it predicted has come to pass is unclear. But what has come to pass has been the state government's amalgamation process, bringing Hervey Bay and Maryborough together.

While the new regional council labours under the burden of amalgamation there is no doubt it is here to stay. The landscape, socially and politically, has been tilted again.

This Friday the door closes on submissions about the latest round of AEC boundary redistributions. The redistribution controversy has largely sailed below the popular radar this time round, perhaps due to community disillusionment and doubts that submissions make a difference to a bureaucratic cartographer's thinking.

But Hervey Bay is no sister to Bundaberg and Maryborough is a million miles away from the world of the Sunshine Coast. Amalgamation, despite the challenges, is inexorably drawing the Fraser Coast cities together and the boundary redistributors should be told.